

## **Minnesota Judicial Branch Organization**

### **Supreme Court**

- Seven Justices
- The state's court of last resort
- Reviews more than 800 cases a year
- Oversees the practice of law

### **Court of Appeals**

- Sixteen judges hear cases in three-judge panels
- Considers more than 2,400 appeals each year

### **District Courts**

- 281 district court judges in 10 judicial districts throughout the state
- The trial court has original jurisdiction in all civil and criminal actions within district boundaries
- Each year, there are more than 2 million cases filed in Minnesota's district courts

### **Judicial Branch Administration**

- The Chief Justice is responsible for management of the Supreme Court and the entire Judicial Branch and also serves as chair of the Judicial Council.
- The Judicial Council serves as the policy-making body for the Judicial Branch.
- The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals is responsible for management of that Court.
- A chief judge and assistant chief judge, assisted by a judicial district administrator, manage each of the 10 judicial districts. A court administrator is responsible for day-to-day operations in each county.
- The State Court Administrator (SCA) serves as staff to the Judicial Council. The SCA Office provides support services to the Judicial Branch.

### **For More Information:**

#### **State Court Administrator's Office**

**Sue Dosal**

**State Court Administrator**

Phone: 651-296-2474

Email: [sue.dosal@courts.state.mn.us](mailto:sue.dosal@courts.state.mn.us)

#### **Judicial Branch Website**

<http://www.mncourts.gov>

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#### **Fourth Judicial District Court Administrator's Office**

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**Marsha Unthank**

**Assistant District Administrator**

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#### **Fourth District Website**

<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/>

For reports on Fairness Studies, Performance Measures, Court Reports, and Judicial Development Survey visit the Research Department at  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=396>



**MINNESOTA  
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

## **What You Should Know About Minnesota's Courts...**



**Hennepin County  
Government Center**

## Minnesota's Third Branch of Government

- Article 1, Section 8 of the Minnesota Constitution states: Every person is entitled to... obtain justice freely and without purchase, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay...
- Administering justice is a **core government function**
- The Judicial Branch mission is "to provide justice through a system that ensures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies"

### The Judicial Branch has targeted three strategic priorities for progress and innovation:

#### 1. Access to Justice

- Complete transition to unified case management system (MNCIS)
- Institute electronic case initiation
- Expand resources for pro se litigants

#### 2. Administering Justice For Effective Results

- Integrate judicial problem-solving approach for dealing with alcohol and other drug (AOD) offenders
- Promote judicial approaches which target early resolution of cases involving families and children
- Institutionalize Children's Justice Initiative

#### 3. Public Trust and Confidence

- Strengthen public education regarding the role of the courts
- Adopt statewide core judicial branch goals
- Assure equitable treatment of all people in the court system regardless of race or ethnicity
- Assure impartial decision-making through the examination of judicial selection processes in Minnesota

### About the Fourth Judicial District:

The Fourth Judicial District serving Hennepin County is comprised of 46 municipalities and a population of 1.1 million, the largest district in the state. Its 62 judges, 16 referees and over 550 staff process approximately 40% of all cases filed statewide.

#### Chief Judge

Lucy A. Wieland  
612-348-9808

#### Assistant Chief Judge

James T. Swenson  
612-348-2122

#### Presiding Judges by division

<b>Civil</b> .....	Francis Connolly 612-596-6835
<b>Criminal</b> .....	Margaret Daly 612-348-6952
<b>Domestic Violence</b> .....	Heidi Schellhas 612-348-6113
<b>Drug Court</b> .....	Beryl Nord 612-348-8248
<b>Family</b> .....	Bruce Peterson 612-596-7126
<b>Juvenile</b> .....	Tanya Bransford 612-348-3771
<b>Probate/Mental Health</b> .....	Peter Albrecht 612-348-2560
<b>Property Court</b> .....	Marilyn Rosenbaum 612-348-8777

### Access to Justice

• **MNCIS**: The Minnesota Court Information System (MNCIS) replaces the existing statewide case management information system designed in the early 1980s. MNCIS will enable the courts to make better use of current staff and resources as caseloads continue to increase. Conversion in the Fourth will be complete in May 2007.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=1650>

• **Self Help Centers (SHC)**: The SHC staff and volunteers help 33,000 visitors annually with divorce, paternity, parenting time, child support, motor vehicle issues, criminal expungement, housing and other cases. Staff provide forms and general education about the law and procedures. The SHC contributes to efficient processing of pro se cases, and is a critical part of the courts' strategic commitment to access to justice for all.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=397>

### Administering Justice for Effective Results

#### Problem Solving Courts

• **Drug Court**: Alternative and more effective judicial approaches to address chemically dependent criminal offenders are increasingly utilized in the Fourth Judicial District. Drug Court seeks to reduce crime and violence related to illegal drug activity, improve treatment results, relieve jail over-crowding by embracing a coordinated and comprehensive approach.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=1241>

• **Early Neutral Evaluation (ENE) Program**: ENE serves divorcing or never-married parents who dispute custody, visitations or parenting plans of their minor children. ENE is designed to short-circuit potentially contentious fights regarding children and explore the possibility of expediting settlement.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=1732>

• **Community Court**: Community Court is a daily arraignment calendar heard at the Public Safety Facility consisting of certain low level livability crimes (disorderly conduct, trespassing, loitering, prostitution, etc.) that affect the community.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=891>

• **Mental Health Court**: This innovative program capitalizes on Criminal Court involvement to identify individuals with mental illness and unmet health care needs. This program has been nationally recognized as a leader for its rapid response to parties' needs and for using court involvement as a means to maximize compliance.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=1741>

#### Public Trust and Confidence

• **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)**: The Fourth Judicial District is working closely with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to rectify overcrowding, poor confinement conditions and disproportionate minority confinement in detention facilities. Specifically, JDAI seeks to establish more effective and efficient systems to reduce the number of children unnecessarily or inappropriately detained, minimize the number of youth who fail to appear in court or re-offend pending adjudication, to redirect public funds towards successful reform strategies and to reduce the racial disparity in the juvenile justice system.  
<http://www.mncourts.gov/district/4/?page=940>